

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 1-14 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1 and 8 are independent. In the Office Action dated December 31, 2003, Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, Claims 1-3, 6, and 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), and Claims 7 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Claims 4-5 and 11-12 were objected to, but were deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Following this response, Claims 1-3, 6-10, and 13-20 remain in this application, of which Claims 1-2 and 8-9 are independent; Claims 15-20 are being added by this response and Claims 4-5 and 11-12 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's rejections in turn.

I. Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

In the Office Action dated December 31, 2003, the Examiner rejected Claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicants regard as their invention. Claims 1-2 and 9 has been amended, and Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments overcome this rejection and add no new matter.

II. Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claim 1-3, 6, and 8-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,949,877 ("*Traw*"). Claim 1

has been amended to include the subject matter of allowed Claim 4. Claim 2 has been amended to include the subject matter of former Claim 1 and allowed Claim 5. Claims 8 and 9 have been amended to include subject matter similar to amended Claims 1 and 2, respectively, though in method form. Claims 3 and 10 have been amended to place them in better form for consideration. No new matter has been added by these amendments. Accordingly, independent Claims 1-2 and 8-9 patentably distinguishes the present invention over the cited art, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 1-2 and 8-9.

Dependent Claims 3, 6-7, 10, and 13-14 are also allowable at least for the reasons above regarding independent Claims 1 and 8, and by virtue of their respective dependencies upon independent Claims 1 and 8. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection of dependent Claims 3, 6-7, 10, and 13-14.

III. New Claims

Claims 15-20 have been added to more distinctly define and to round out the protection for the invention to which Applicants are entitled. Applicants respectfully submit that these claims are allowable over the cited art and that they add no new matter.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Office Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that

were not addressed by the Examiner in the Office Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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